

Council on Postsecondary Education
Committee on Equal Opportunities
October 17, 2005

Enrollment of African Americans As First-Time Freshmen

Five Questions: One Mission, the public agenda for postsecondary and adult education for 2005-2010, presents a road map that over the next five years should allow some realization of better lives for Kentucky's people. Whether all of Kentucky's people are benefiting is evaluated by responding to five seemingly simple questions. Question one becomes the center piece for answering the question "are more Kentucky resident African Americans being admitted and enrolling at Kentucky's public institutions of higher learning and to what extent are we gaining or losing ground when considering access and equity to postsecondary education?"

At the beginning of the fall semester, the headlines of the major newspaper screamed "Number of black UK freshmen drops 40%" Policymakers immediately began to ask questions, such as:

- Is this a trend?
- Are all institutions experiencing similar decreases?
- What is being done to stem the tide?
- Are these in-state or out-of-state students or both?
- Is there a common approach or program that all of the institutions should be implementing to continually increase the level of diversity on their campus?
- What is the Council and its Committee on Equal Opportunities doing about this issue?

Attachments A, B, and C provide a general analysis of 2000-2005 enrollment data for African Americans and other ethnic groups at Kentucky's public institutions. The analysis shows that the pattern of enrollment of first-time freshmen fluctuates among the institutions with no trend established for any racial group, including whites. The 2005 fall data show that four institutions experienced a decrease in the enrollment of first-time freshmen African American students while four institutions have slight increases, and one institution with a significantly larger increase. Most institutions experienced an increase in first-time freshmen enrollment for Kentucky resident African American students. The most surprising statistic is the decrease in enrollment of African American students at KCTCS institutions. The greatest amount of growth in student enrollment across the system has been in the KCTCS system but the data show a down turn in first-time freshmen enrollment for African American students beginning with fall 2000. While total enrollment at KCTCS increased from 5,135 in fall

2000 to 5,401 in fall 2005 the data indicate that on an annual basis fewer African Americans have access to KCTCS institutions.

The CEO is asked to examine the data and report to the Council at its meeting November 7 any findings or recommendations appropriate to address this emerging concern.